PART IV

Notable Shrines along the Pilgrimage Route

Contents

1. The Evolution of the *Stupa* as an Object of Veneration [4, 24]

1.1 Objects of Reverence in Buddhism

While the Buddha was staying at Jetavana *vihara* in Savatthi, devout followers would bring flowers and garlands to pay their respects to him. In his absence, they would lay the flowers and garlands at the entrance to the Fragrant Chamber (*gandhakuti*) and depart happily. Hearing of this, Anathapindika requested Ven. Ananda to find out from the Buddha of a way the laity could pay respects to him when he was away on preaching tours. According to the Buddha, there are three objects of reverence (*cetiyani*), namely:

(a) Objects of reverence appertaining to the **body** (*saririka*)
(b) Objects of reverence appertaining to **personal use** (*paribhogika*)
(c) Objects of reverence **reminiscent of the Buddha** (*uddesika*)

The Buddha said that erecting an object of reverence appertaining to his body was not proper while he was alive but proper after his *Parinibbana*. An object of reverence reminiscent of the Buddha is purely mental and has no physical basis. But the great Bodhi tree used by the Buddha whether he is alive or dead is an object of reverence. As a result of the Buddha's advice, Ven. Ananda made arrangements for a sapling of the Bodhi tree from Buddhagaya to be planted at the entrance of Jetavana monastery to provide the lay disciples with a place to pay respects to the Buddha in his absence. The tree that grew from this sapling is called the Ananda-Bodhi.

1.2 Devotion in Buddhism[44]

This incident from the Scriptures demonstrates the laity's adoration of the Buddha. Their devotion was so great that they needed an object of reverence to venerate him in his absence. Such devotion or *bhatti* (Sanskrit: *bhakti*) is common in all religions. The Buddha repeatedly

discouraged any **excessive blind veneration** paid to him personally because he knew that too much emotional devotion would obstruct mental development in the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.

In the Scriptures, there is a story of the monk **Vakkali** who was full of devotion and love for the Buddha. Even when he was gravely ill, all he wanted was to see the Buddha, as he was ever so desirous to behold him bodily. To him the Buddha said: "*What good will it be to see this foul body? Vakkali, he who sees the Dhamma (Teaching) sees me. Indeed, Vakkali, seeing the Dhamma is seeing me, seeing me is seeing the Dhamma*." (*Khanda Samyutta, Vakkali Sutta*).

In another incident shortly before his *Parinibbana,* the twin Sala trees broke out in full bloom and their blossoms rained upon his body together with celestial flowers and scented powder from the sky while the sound of heavenly music and voices filled the air out of reverence for him, the **Buddha advised**: "*Yet not thus, Ananda is the Tathagata respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped and honoured in the highest degree. But, Ananda, whatsoever bhikkhu or bhikkhini, layman or laywoman abides by the Teaching, lives uprightly in the Teaching, walks in the way of the Teaching, it is by him that the Tathagata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped and honoured in the highest degree.*" (*Mahaparinibbana Sutta, V, 6*).

These two teachings appear to convey the message of the Master that a true and deep understanding of the *Dhamma* through practice of the Noble Eightfold Path is vastly superior to any external homage or mere emotional devotion. However, we should not conclude that the Buddha disparaged a reverential and devotional attitude of mind stemming from a true understanding and deep admiration of what is great and noble. It should also be emphasized that "**Seeing the *Dhamma***" is not mere intellectual knowledge through study or logic but the experiential knowledge (*bhavanamaya ňāna*) through the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the ***saddha*** that affirms that no system wherein the Noble Eightfold Path is absent can claim to lead to Emancipation.

The Buddha refused to be made an object of a 'personality cult'. (Note: No Buddha images appeared during his lifetime and the first

five centuries after *Parinibbana*). But he knew that respect and homage paid to those worthy of it is a great blessing, which he preached in the *Mangala Sutta.* This is because when one assumes a respectful attitude, one develops humility and is able to recognize the superior qualities of others and learn from them. This is one of the factors necessary for progress, whether spiritual or worldly.

Devotion is a natural expression of confidence (*saddha*) and plays a vital role in the **balance of the faculties** (*indriya samata*) with its complement faculty of *panna* (wisdom). A one-sided development of the intellectual faculties (intelligence, insight, wisdom) tends to make one skeptical while a one-sided development of faith or devotion tends to make one gullible. Hence both faculties must be 'balanced' in order to lead to mental and spiritual progress.

For the laity, the routine acts of devotion like the offering of flowers, lights, incense and worship (*puja*) are a means to connect with the Triple Gem in their daily life. More important and of greater validity than these outward forms of devotion is the capacity to turn them to the practice of devotional mental culture such as the contemplation of the Virtues of the Buddha that will lead to great benefits, namely:

i) Acquires **abundant faith,** which purifies the mind so that **mindfulness** and **concentration** is easily established.
ii) Productive of **joy** which is helpful in difficult times e.g. sickness, loss or facing hardships.
iii) Instills **confidence** in oneself thereby dispelling fear, anxiety, doubt and restlessness.

Devotional meditation such as the Recollection of the Buddha can serve as an invaluable aid in attaining mental concentration, which is the basis of liberating insight. This function of devotional meditation cannot be better described than in the words of the Master himself: "*When a noble disciple recollects the Tathagata thus, on that occasion his mind is not obsessed by greed, hatred or delusion; his mind is straight, with the Tathagata as its object. A noble disciple whose mind is straight becomes zealous of the goal, zealous of the Dhamma, gains gladness (pamojja) connected with the Dhamma. When he is gladdened, rapture (piti) arises; for one uplifted by rapture, the whole body becomes calm (passadhi); one calm in body*

feels happy (sukha); for one who is happy, the mind becomes concentrated (samadhi). Such a one is called a noble disciple who amidst a humanity gone wrong, has attained to what is right; who amidst an afflicted humanity dwells un-afflicted; who has entered upon the stream of the Dhamma and develops recollection of the Buddha." (*Anguttara,* Book of Sixes, 10)

1.3 The Rise of the *Stupa* after the Buddha's *Parinibbana*

The word *stupa* (Pali '*thupa*', Anglo-Indian 'tope') derived from the root '*stup*' (to heap) is a mound or tumulus. Originally they were associated with funerals, being mounds containing the ashes and charred remains of the dead collected from the funeral pyre. The practice of erecting *stupas* over corporeal relics was pre-Buddhistic.

The Buddha realized the significance of devotion among the laity by sanctioning the worship of his corporeal relics. In answer to Ven. Ananda's question of what should be done with the Buddha's body after His *Parinibbana*, the Buddha said that it should be cremated like the body of a Universal monarch and the corporeal remains from the cremation should be honoured by *stupas* erected over them at the crossroads. For the monks, he realized that too much time spent on such devotional rites could hinder their practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. So he advised them **"not to hinder themselves by honoring his body but leave it to the laymen who are devoted to the *Tathagata* and will render due honor to his body."**

In the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, the Buddha further mentioned that there are **four persons worthy of a *stupa*,** namely: a Supremely Enlightened Buddha, a *Pacceka* Buddha, an *Ariyan* disciple and a Universal monarch. 'And why is each worthy of a *stupa*? Because at the thought: "*This is a stupa of the Supremely Enlightened One, of a Pacceka Buddha, of an Ariyan disciple, of a Universal monarch", people's hearts are made peaceful and at the breaking-up of the body after death, they are reborn in happy states (sugati). That is the reason and those are the four who are worthy of a stupa.*'

This is how the Buddha sanctified the *stupa* from an ordinary grave-mound to its present position as a supreme object of **veneration** and **sanctity** to Buddhists. *Stupa* worship took a new dimension when Asoka converted to Buddhism and built 84,000 *stupas* all over his empire. In the course of time, *stupas* evolved from simple mounds of earth into ostentatious structures of architectural beauty and magnificence and became the chief emblem of the Buddhist faith.

As the body-relics enshrined within a *stupa* stood as a symbol of the presence of the Buddha, prayers were normally offered and rites of worship performed, such as offering of lights, flowers, garlands, incense, buntings and cloth wrapped round the mound. An ancient custom in India is to pass round a person of reverence or a holy object, keeping him or the object on the right side. This is called '***padakkhina***' (Sanskrit: '*pradaksina*'). In the Scriptures, a visitor always behaves thus when about to take leave of the Buddha. This custom became a ceremonial rite in *stupa*-worship and a path for circumambulation was usually provided in a *stupa*.

For the skilful pilgrim, the circumambulation around the *stupa* may be turned into **walking meditation** exercise to develop mindfulness or loving-kindness. Those who are more inclined towards devotional practices should consider the Recollections of Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha* at the *stupas* to develop faith and attain the purity of mind.

1.4 Four Types of *Stupas*

Buddhist *stupas* may be divided into four categories, namely:

(a) *Saririka* or Relic *Stupa*

These *stupas* contain the **corporeal relics** of the Buddha, the Chief Disciples, Buddhist teachers and saints. *Stupas* containing the relics of the Buddha, which are considered the most sacred objects of worship, are usually very large and grand, as they have been enlarged and renovated several times by successive Buddhist kings of India. According to legend, Emperor Asoka broke into seven of

the original eight relic *stupas* (Ramagama *stupa* was left intact), took a major portion of the Buddha's relics and distributed them in 84,000 *stupas* all over his empire. As a result, one can still see many of these *stupas* in India as well as in Pakistan, e.g., Dhammarajika *stupa* in Sarnath, India and its namesake in Taxila, Pakistan.

(b) *Paribhogika Stupa*

These *stupas* are built over **sacred objects used** by Buddha, e.g., his robe, water-pot, razor and needle-case.

(c) *Uddesika* or Memorial *Stupa*

These *stupas* were built to commemorate important incidents in the Buddha's life, including those of his previous births or spot hallowed by his presence. Thus Hsüan Tsang gives us an account of fourteen *stupas* at Vesali, of which twelve were commemorative ones and only two were relic *stupas*.

(d) Votive *Stupas*

These are usually small *stupas* erected at sacred sites by devotees mainly as an **offering** for attaining religious merit. The most number of votive *stupas* can be seen at the four places of pilgrimage, namely: (i) Lumbini, surrounding the site where the Buddha was born; (ii) Bodhgaya, surrounding the Bodhi tree where the Buddha attained Supreme Enlightenment; (iii) Deer Park in Sarnath, where the Buddha preached the First Sermon; (iv) Kusinara surrounding the Mahaparinibbana Temple where the Buddha passed into *Mahaparinibbana*. Besides these places, votive *stupas* are also erected around relic *stupas*, as the latter are considered supreme objects of worship.

Pilgrims who visit the Eight Great Places will have the rare opportunity to view the various types of *stupas*, starting from the most ancient prototype earthen *stupa* at **Vesali** to the most elaborate Dhamek Stupa in **Sarnath**. Those who undertake the journey to Bhopal will have the opportunity to see the **Stupa of Sanchi** where the relics of the Chief Disciples were discovered.

2. Pava, where the Buddha had his Last Meal

2.1 How to reach there

Pava is located about 15 km east of Kushinagar, near the present-day village of **Padruana**. On the way, one crosses the Kosi River which was known as the Kakudha River during the Buddha's time.

2.2 Religious Significance

According to the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, after leaving Bhoganagara (present-day Kesariya) the Buddha travelled to Pava with a company of monks and stayed at the mango grove of his lay disciple the **metal-smith Cunda**. On learning this, Cunda visited the Buddha to pay respects, and after listening to a *Dhamma* talk, invited the Buddha and *Sangha* to his house for the next day's meal where he served '*sukara maddava*' (*sukara* = boar or pig; *maddava* = soft, tender or delicate) translated as '**pig's delicacy**'. Two renderings of this term are possible, namely: (1) tender pork flesh or (2) something enjoyed by boars or pigs, which has been thought to refer to a mushroom or truffle, or a shoot or tuber. It is stated that the Buddha did not allow the monks to eat it, but he himself consumed the '*sukara maddava*'.

After consuming the last meal, Buddha suffered from severe pains and dysentery, yet he continued his final journey to Kusinara, a distance of three *gavutas* (about 15 km). Due to the severity of the illness, he had to stop twenty-five times to rest. In order to dispel any remorse arising in the mind of Cunda that his meal offering was the cause of his death, the Buddha asked Ananda to dispel the **remorse of Cunda** by explaining that of all food offerings, only two offerings of food, both equal in fruition, exceed all others in greatness of results. **Which two?** One partaken of by the Buddha on becoming Fully Enlightened (**Sujata's milk rice**), and the other partaken of by the Buddha before his *Parinibbana* (**Cunda's meal**). According to the Buddha, by his deed Cunda had gained great merits that lead to long life, beauty, good health, glory, heavenly birth and sovereignty.

2.3 Miracle of the Clearing of the Waters

Near Pava is a river called the **Kosi River**, which is identified with the **Kakudha River** during the Buddha's time. Before reaching the Kakudha River, the Buddha who was very tired and thirsty (probably due to dehydration from the diarrhoea) had to stop to quench his thirst. According to *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* IV, 24-32, the Buddha asked Ven. Ananda to fetch water from the nearby stream for him to drink. The latter did not go at first because many carts had passed over it earlier causing the water to become soiled and muddy. Instead Ven. Ananda said that the Kakudha River was close by and its waters were clear, cool and pleasant and suggested that the Buddha could quench his thirst and refresh his limbs there. However the Buddha still insisted that he wanted a drink. After the Buddha's third request, Ven. Ananda went to the stream and witnessed a miracle. The shallow water, which had been disturbed by many cartwheels so that it flowed turbid and soiled, became clear and settled down, making it pure and pleasant for consumption.

2.4 *Stupa* of the Mallas of Pava

After the Buddha's *Parinibbana*, the **Mallas of Pava** claimed a share of his relics and erected a *stupa* over the relics. Recently the ASI has excavated a huge mound revealing the presence of a brick *stupa* at a site said to be **Cunda's mango grove** and is probably the *stupa* built by the Mallas of Pava. When Hsuan Tsang visited Kusinara during the 7th century AD, he mentioned the presence of a *stupa* built by King Asoka at Cunda's old house, northeast of the city. Pilgrims after visiting Kushinagar should travel to Pava and visit this *stupa* where one should arouse urgency by recalling to mind Buddha's last meal and how he finally succumbed to sickness and death. Reflecting on this one becomes truly apprehensive, and this **arouses religious urgency** to practise the Noble Eightfold Path to end suffering.

3. Kesariya, site of the World's Tallest *Stupa* [8, 16, 24]

3.1 How to reach there

From Kushinagar, travel southwards by National Highway NH 28 to **Gopalganj** and continue across the Gandak River to Piprajoti. Take the road towards Motihari and turn off at **Pipra**. Don't take the Chakia road, it looks shorter but is virtually impassable. If you leave Kushinagar around 4 a.m., you will be able to arrive at Kesariya by 10a.m. and then continue onwards to Vaishali in the afternoon. From Patna, travel 70km to Muzaffarpur and drive north another 60km until you come to Pipra. All distances are approximate.

3.2 Historical Background

According to Dr. K K Mohd, superintendent of the ASI Patna Circle, authentic references about Kesariya include the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, which deals with the last journey of Lord Buddha from Rajgir to Kushinagar in which there is a mention of **Bhoganagara**, presently known as Kesariya. This is very likely as Kesariya falls on a well-known route from Vaishali to Kushinagar and marks the border of the Lichhavis with the Mallas of Kusinara. The place is believed to be associated with Alara Kalama, an ascetic of Buddha's time, and has been identified as **Kesaputta** of Buddhist texts, where the Buddha preached the famous ***Kesaputta Sutta*** to the Kalamas.

3.3 Religious Significance

According to the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hsien, going from Kusinara to the southeast for twelve *yojanas* (1 *yojana* = 7 miles), is the place where the Licchavis wished to follow Buddha to (the place of) his *Parinibbana*. Earlier at Vaishali he had announced that his *Parinibbana* would take place in Kusinara and as he walked with a company of monks to the final resting place, the Licchavis,

overcome by great sorrow, kept following him, unwilling to go away. Finally as they reached the border with the Mallas of Kosala, he created the illusion of a large and deep ditch, which compelled them to go back. He then gave them his **alms-bowl** as a memorial and exhorted them to return to their houses. On this they went back and erected a stone pillar on which this account is engraved.

According to the Chinese pilgrim **Hsuan Tsang**, about 200 li (56 km) to the northwest of the city of Vaishali, is an old and long deserted city. In it is a *stupa*. This is the place where the Buddha delivered the *Makhadeva Sutta* in *Majjhima Nikaya*, concerning his previous life when he was a *Bodhisatta* named **King Makhadeva**. At that time he was living at **Mithila** in the **Makhadeva Grove**, which is identified as the site of the Kesariya Stupa. (**Note**: The location of Kesariya given by Fa Hsien was 12 *yojanas* or 154 km southeast from Kushinagar while that given by Hsuan Tsang was 200 li or 56 km northwest of Vaishali. Both point to Kesariya.)

Later on probably after *Parinibbana*, the Licchavis built a mud *stupa* at Kesariya to commemorate that emotional event. In the course of time, during the **Maurya, Sunga** and **Kushana** period, it became a brick ***stupa*** with several additions and enlargements. In the 6th century AD, during the Gupta period, it was further enlarged and embellished with hundreds of sculptures. The latest ASI dating puts the *stupa* to the 8th century Pala period.

Although some quarters would have us believe that the Kesariya *stupa* once enshrined the alms-bowl of the Buddha it does not agree with the observations of the Chinese pilgrims. Both would have mentioned such an important relic if it had been enshrined at Kesariya. Secondly, before the Buddha's *Parinibbana*, the practice of enshrining objects used by him was unknown.

Cunningham is of the opinion that the Licchavis took the alms bowl back to Vaishaili as directed by the Buddha and that the Kesariya *stupa* was simply a memorial *stupa* built by the Licchavis to mark the spot where they had taken leave of Buddha (For an account of the alms-bowl relic, see page 150)

3.4 Objects of Interest

The main attraction at Kesariya is a tall mound of brick and earthen debris 62 feet high and 1400 feet in circumference, locally known as '**Deora**', located 3km to the south of the village. The fame of this ancient structure is associated with **Raja Ben or Vena**. According to the **Padma Purana** (mythology), Raja Ben was a Buddhist and the title of Chakravarti was conferred upon him because of his great deeds and generosity. The people praised him as a landlord since he did not impose any tax. Unfortunately, one day Raja Ben announced that he was going to impose tax in the form of a grain of gold. Thereafter Raja Ben fell victim to ominous consequences of this policy of greed. His divine powers abruptly disappeared and his wife drowned while bathing. This incident brought despair to Raja Ben. On the advice of the court Pandits, he built the Deora or a *Stupa* and entered it with his family whereupon he was never seen again!

In 1861-62, Cunningham excavated a part of this mound and exposed traces of walls of cells of a Buddhist monastery and a temple enshrining inside a colossal Buddha image, which was later reported stolen and lost.

According to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) team that carried out excavations in 2002, the *stupa* rises to a height of 104 feet and is one foot taller than the famous **Borobodur** *Stupa* in Java. It was 123-feet tall before the 1934 earthquake in Bihar. In the glorious days when Buddhism thrived in India, the Kesariya *Stupa* was 150-feet and Borobodur *stupa* 138-feet tall.

Pilgrims visiting Kesariya will be able to see the dilapidated conditions of this once glorious monument, which is overgrown with bushes and trees. At the front main terrace are found several stucco figures of Lord Buddha in *Bhumiphassa* posture in brick cells provided all over the terraces. All the Buddha images have been mutilated, indicating the vandalism that took place at this monument after Buddhism disappeared from India after the 12th century AD. Reflecting on the impermanent nature (*anicca*) of all conditioned things, one is filled with a deep sense of religious urgency (*samvega*) and urgent desire to practise the Buddha's Teaching.

4. Lauriya Nandangarh, site of an elegant Asokan Pillar and the Nandangarh *Stupa* [24]

4.1 How to reach there

From Kushinagar, travel southwards by National Highway NH 28 to **Gopalganj** and continue across the Gandak River to Piprajoti. Take the road northwards to **Motihari** and **Bettiah** until you arrive at Lauriya Nandangarh. Distance from Kushinagar to Motihari is 115km and from Motihari to Lauriya Nandangarh is 71km. From Patna, travel 70km to Muzaffarpur and drive north another 155km passing Motihari and Bettiah until you arrive at Lauriya Nandangarh.

4.2 Asokan Pillar with Lion Capital

The village of Lauriya Nadangarh in West Champaran district derives its name from the presence of an inscribed Asokan pillar (called '**Laur**' in local parlance) and the ruins of a 25m high colossal *stupa* known as **Nandangarh**, about 2km south west of the Asokan pillar. Of all the Asokan pillars still standing today in India, the one at Lauriya Nandangarh is the most beautiful and regal looking. The column is well proportioned and elegant in appearance in contrast to the clumsily executed pillars at Lumbini or Vaishali. It is inscribed with the Edicts I-VI of Asoka in clear, beautifully cut Brahmi characters. In spite of exposure to sun, rain, wind and dust for over 2300 years, it still maintains the original polished appearance.

The pillar (estimated weight 18 tons) is cut from a single block of polished sandstone 10m in height and with diameter of 0.9m at the base and 0.67m at the top. The capital, which is 1.9m tall, is bell shaped with a circular abacus ornamented with a row of pecking geese, and supporting the statue of a single lion. Its head had been

slightly damaged by indiscriminate gunshots in the past while the lower portion of the pillar is covered with graffiti.

4.3 Nandangarh *Stupa*

About 2km southwest of the Asokan pillar is a 25m high mound known as Nandangarh. Excavation of this mound yielded the ruins of a colossal *stupa* that had a circumference of about 457m near the base. The excavations also yielded a large number of stone beads, terracotta figurines, terracotta sealing of about the first century AD, punch marked cast coins, thus proving that the *stupa* was erected during 2nd century AD.

Externally, the *stupa* rises in terraces, the basement and the lower two terraces having a polygonal plan and the upper terraces being circular. The lower terraces form the platform and circular terraces form the moulded base of the drum above the platform. During a later restoration of the *stupa*, new circular walls with three processional paths were constructed around the basement and the first two terraces above it. In the core of the *stupa*, at a depth of 10.7m was exposed a 3.7m tall *stupa* with polygonal base. No relics were found inside but beside it was a tiny copper casket containing a long strip of a birch-bark manuscript of about fourth century AD. The few words, which could be deciphered show that the manuscript represented a Buddhist text, probably the *Paticca Samuppada*. This edifice is the earliest example of a form of terraced *stupa*, which was copied by the builders of **Borobudur** in Java around 800AD.

5. The Ananda *Stupa* in Hajipur

5.1 How to reach there

Hajipur is located on the northern bank of the Ganges River, 10 km from Patna. The Ananda Stupa is presently situated in the western outskirts of **Hajipur** at a place called **Ramchaura Mandir**, about 1 km south of the **Masjid Chowk**.

5.2 Religious Significance

In ancient times after crossing the Ganges at Patna the first village on the other side was Ukkacala, now called Hajipur. The Buddha is known to have taught only one discourse at this place, the *Cula Goplalaka Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya*.

According to Dhammapada Commentary, when **Ven. Ananda** was one hundred and twenty years old, he knew his lifespan would come to an end in seven days' time. Accordingly he set out from Rajagaha to Vaishali following the route taken by the Buddha. King Ajatasattu heard this and, accompanied by his entourage, went after him with the intention of begging him to stay. Meanwhile the people of Vesali heard that Ananda was coming to their territory and they flocked to the banks of the Ganges to welcome him.

When Ajatasattu caught up with the aged saint on the seventh day, his boat had already reached the middle of the river. The crowds on both banks were imploring him to come to their side. So as not to disappoint either party and to avoid the possibility of conflict Ananda rose into the air and entered into *Parinibbana* by meditating on the fire elemeny and setting his body on fire by spontaneous combustion reducing it to ashes, which fell on both sides of the river. Half his ashes fell on one side of the river, half on the other. So the people of each city taking half the relics returned and erected *stupas* over them.

The *stupa* built on the south (Patna) bank of the Ganges has long ago been washed away by the river's constantly changing course but the one on the northern bank is now a grassy mound with a Hindu temple on it. Archeological excavations were conducted around the area in 1994 to 1997 and revealed the presence of a brick-well having double walls belonging to the Kushana period.

5.3 Present State of Ananda *Stupa*

When the author visited the Ananda Stupa in November 2008, the whole place appeared to be badly maintained and in a deplorable condition (see Plate 53). There is a dilapidated Hindu temple built on top of the stupa and stray cows were seen wandering in the area. Some locals even used the slope on the stupa to dry cow dung in the sun. Seeing the famous *Stupa* of the *Treasurer of the *Dhamma* in such a dilapidated state today is indeed **disheartening** and will surely **arouse apprehension** among the pious disciples and spur them to practise the Buddha's Teachings in earnest.

***Note:** Venerable Ananda is commonly known as the'Treasurer of the *Dhamma* or *Dhamma Bhandagarika*'. During the First Council held in Rajagaha three months after *Parinibbana*, Ven. Ananda was chosen by the Arahants to recite all the *suttas* delivered by the Buddha although he was still a Sotapanna. The reason was because he could remember all that he heard directly from Buddha's own mouth when he was the Buddha's personal attendant. In fact the Buddha pronounced him foremost among those of retentive memory.

Although Ananda was not an Arahant as yet, he remembered the Buddha's last advice to him, that should he put forth effort, soon he too will become an Arahant. So Ananda made strenuous efforts and attained Arahantship on the eve of the First Council. The Book of Discipline states that he was the only disciple to attain Arahantship free from the postures of sitting, standing, walking or lying down. At the First Council, Ven. Ananda prefaced each discourse with an account of where and to whom it was spoken, beginning with the words '***Evam me sutam***' — 'thus have I heard'.

6. Kosambi, site of a Quarrel among the *Sangha*[24]

6.1 How to reach there

Kosambi is 60km from Allahabad and can be reached by road.

6.2 Religious Significance

Kosambi, the capital of the **Vamsa kingdom** was one of the 6 important cities of Northern India during the Buddha's time. Its ruler, **King Udena**, was initially hostile towards the new religion but later became friendly towards the Buddha at the encouragement of one of his queens, **Samavati** who became a *sotapanna* upon hearing a discourse by her maid **Khujjuttara**. She met a tragic end in the hands of the jealous rival queen **Magandiya**, who locked her inside a palace and set it on fire. When the king uncovered Magandiya's crime, he had her burnt alive together with her accomplices as punishment. In connection with this tragic incident, the Buddha uttered the famous Verse 21 of the *Dhammapada*:

Appamado amata padam —	Heedfulness is the path to the deathless (*Nibbana*).
Pamado maccuno padam —	Heedlessness is the path to death.
Appamatta na miyanti —	The heedful never die.
Ye pamatta yatha mata —	The heedless are as if dead.

Later on King Udena converted to the religion after hearing a discourse on sense-restraint by the Venerable **Pindola Bharadvaja**.

But it was mainly through the efforts of three leading bankers of the city **— Ghosita** (foster father of Samavati), **Kukkuta** and **Pavarika** that the religion found a strong footing there. On one occasion when Buddha was staying at Jetavana, these three merchants went together to invite the Buddha to their city. When Buddha agreed, each built a

monastery to receive and accommodate the Buddha and his following. Thus came into existence Ghositarama, Kukkutarama and Pavarikambavana (Pavarika's mango grove).

The Buddha spent the ninth retreat at **Ghositarama** and it was during his stay there that a dissension arose among the monks that almost ended in a schism. Unable to settle the dispute between the two parties, the Buddha retired to the forest and spent his tenth retreat at the **Parileyyaka Forest** where an elephant and a monkey administered to his needs. When the lay people found out the reasons for the Buddha's departure, they refused to show respect or offer any alms food to the monks. This jolted the quarrelsome monks to their senses and they reconciled with each other. Still the laity would not treat them respectfully until they had made amends with the Buddha, who was now in Jetavana monastery. So the disputing parties had to travel to Savatthi to settle their litigation in the Buddha's presence. The story of the monks of Kosambi is given in the *Dhammapada* Commentary.

The Buddha delivered several discourses at Kosambi and several *Arahants* including Ven Sariputta and Ven. Ananda spent some time in Ghositarama. The *Vinaya* records that after the First Council Ven. Ananda went to Ghositarama to inform Ven. Channa of the imposition of the higher penalty amounting to complete ostracism, which the Buddha had pronounced on the latter before His *Mahaparinibbana*.

6.3 Historical Background

Emperor Asoka visited Kosambi during the 3rd century BC and raised two pillars to commemorate his visit. In time the establishment swelled in numbers. The Mahavamsa records that 30,000 monks headed by Ven. Urudhammarakkhita of Ghositarama attended the raising of the Great Stupa at Anuradhapura by King Dutthagamini (1st century BC). Ghositarama continued to flourish during the Kushana, Magha and Gupta periods.

During Fa Hsien's time (399-414 AD) the monastery was inhabited by monks but 200 years later, Hsuan Tsang found the place in ruins but still inhabited by 300 monks. Kosambi must have suffered the same fate as other Buddhist centres following the Muslim conquest of Northern India during the 12th century AD, after which all the Buddhist centres fell into oblivion.

Cunningham was the first to identify Kausambi in the village of **Kausam** during the 19th century. Located on the left bank of the Yamuna, it consists of extensive ruins of a large brick monastery, identified on the basis of an inscribed slab of the 1st century AD with the Ghositarama monastery, the base of an impressive *stupa a*nd some small *stupas*. The coins and terracotta figurines found scattered there are now on display in the **Allahabad Museum** and the Kausambi Museum. The remains of a dilapidated Asokan pillar, an old fort and the ruins of Ghositarama are of archeological interest here. Another Asokan pillar of better condition was removed by the Mughals to Allahabad fort where it still stands. The archaeological excavations here have yielded a large number of sculptures and figurines, coins, punch-marked and cast coins and terracotta sculptures which show the reverence the city was held by the devout, in times gone by. All these religious finds can be viewed at the Allahabad Museum.

6.4 Allahabad Museum

Allahabad Museum located at Kamala Nehru Road inside Chandra Shekhar Azad Park, has 18 galleries containing a wide range of stone sculptures. The sculptures include 2nd century BC pieces from Bharhut and Kausambi, 1st Century AD Kushana from Mathura, 4th-6th century Gupta and 11th century carvings from Khajuraho. The exhibit also has terracotta figurines from Kausambi, Rajasthani Miniatures, coins and paintings by Nicholas Roerich and artifacts donated by the Nehru family. The museum opens daily from 10:30 am to 4:30 pm except Mondays.

7. Delhi Asoka Rock Edict [41]

Sandwiched between Srinivaspuri and East of Kailash in South Delhi is the **Asoka Park** where the centre of attraction is a rocky outcrop. Few people know that there is a minor rock edict of Asoka, here in Delhi. It was a chance discovery in 1966 by a contractor who was about to blast away the rocks for the development of a colony. This edict is engraved on a tilted rock face where children used to slide for fun. It consists of 10 lines of Brahmi script in Prakrit dialect. The text of the **Delhi Rock Edict** reads as follows:

"*Thus saith the Beloved of the Gods:*
A little more than two years and half have passed since I am avowed a lay follower of the Buddha. But I am not vigorously exerting myself in cause of Dhamma for the first one year. However, it is a little more than a year that I am devoutly attached to the Sangha and exerting myself vigorously.

The gods who are unmingled with the people inhabiting Jambudvipa during the ages down to the present time, have now been made by me mingled with them. This is indeed the result of my exertion in the cause of Dhamma.

And this result is not to be achieved only by the people of superior position like myself; but even a poor man is as well able to attain the great heaven if he is zealous in the cause of Dhamma.

Now, this proclamation has been issued for the following purpose, viz. that the poor and rich may exert themselves; that even the people residing in the territories outside the borders of my dominions may realize this, and that this exertion on the part of the people may be of long duration. This cause will be made by me to progress more or less to one and half times".

This edict right in the heart of the Indian capital engraved in circa 263 BC leaves no room for doubt that Asoka embraced Buddhism and that Delhi was an important centre of Buddhism during his time.

7.1 Delhi during the Buddha's Time

Delhi stands on the site of the celebrated **Indapatta** (Sanskrit: Indraprastha), which Hindus believe was founded by the Pandavas of the Mahabharata legends. During the Buddha's time, it was a flourishing town in **Kuru country**. Delhi appears to be associated with Buddhism from the earliest period, for according to the Account of the Distribution of Relics in *Buddhavamsa*, the Buddha's razor and needle-case were enshrined at Indapatta.

In the *Janavasabha Sutta* of *Digha Nikaya*, Kuru is mentioned along with the other *Janapadas* or countries where the Lord Buddha delivered a number of discourses. According to the *Jatakas*, Kuru was 300 leagues in extent and Indapatta (near modern Delhi) was its capital. Lord Buddha during his visits to the Kuru country generally stayed at **Kammasadhamma**, a market town of the Kuru people.

The name of Kammasadhamma occurs frequently in the Pali scriptures because the Buddha delivered several discourses there, the most well known being the '*Maha-Satipatthana Sutta*' and '*Maha-Nidana Sutta*' of the *Digha Nikaya*. It is said that the Buddha taught these *suttas* to the people of Kammasadhamma because of their intelligence. The commentary states that every household in Kammasadhamma had an *ariya* disciple and the villagers were always mindful in their daily activities.

The site of Kammasadhamma has not been identified by anyone as yet. It may be possible that the area around the Asoka Park in South Delhi could be the site of this celebrated village in view of the fact that Asoka had chosen this area to declare his faith and exertion in rock edict for posterity.

8. The Great *Stupa* of Sanchi [27, 40]

8.1 How to reach there

Sanchi is about 50 km by road from **Bhopal**, the capital of Madhya Pradesh. For the pilgrim who has completed the pilgrimage at Varanasi, the best way to visit Sanchi is to take the overnight train from Varanasi to Bhopal. After touring Sanchi and other places around Bhopal, one can return by train to New Delhi to fly home.

8.2 Historical Background

Although **Sanchi** was not hallowed by the Buddha's visit during his ministry, **King Asoka** built a brick *stupa* together with an Asokan pillar on the flattened top of the **Vedisagiri** hill for local Buddhists to worship. This was due his happy association with **Vedisa**, birthplace of **Devi,** his first wife whom he married when he was the viceroy of Ujjayini (Ujjain). This queen of Asoka was a devotee of the Buddha and a Sakyan, descended from a Sakyan family who migrated to Vedisa after escaping the destruction of Kapilavatthu by Vidudabha (see Note 10 on page 85). Of Devi were born a son **Mahinda** and daughter **Sanghamitta**. Devi did not follow Asoka to Pataliputta but stayed behind in Vedisa. She is stated to have constructed a monastery on Vidisagiri hill, generally identified with the hill of Sanchi. According to the **Mahavamsa**, the **Arahant Mahinda** visited his mother at Vedisa, and the latter took him up to the beautiful monastery of Vedisagiri where he stayed for a month before he set out for Sri Lanka.

The original *stupa* of Sanchi was 60 feet in diameter at the base and hemispherical in shape with a raised terrace surrounding its base and a crowning pinnacle. It was extensively damaged by the opponents of Buddhism following the fall of the Mauryan Empire in 185 BC but was soon rebuilt by devout Buddhists of Vidisa and elsewhere. In the course of reconstruction, it was enlarged to twice its previous

size. The elaborately carved four gateways (**torana**), were donated by the chief artisan of a **Satahavana** king in the 1st century BC. The last addition to the Great Stupa was made during the Gupta period (450 AD) when four images of the Buddha, each seated under a pillared canopy were installed against the walls of the *stupa* facing the four entrances. Around the Great Stupa grew a grand complex of *stupas*, temples, pillars and monasteries covering a period of about 1500 years from the 3rd century BC to the 12th century AD.

After the Muslim conquest of Northern India in the 13th century AD, the Sanchi shrines became neglected and fell into ruins. They were eventually engulfed by jungle and completely forgotten until their discovery by **General Taylor** in 1818. In the following years, these monuments were damaged to a large extent by archeologists, treasure-hunters and local vandals. Even the Asokan pillar was broken into pieces by a local landlord to be utilized as a sugar-cane press. In 1881, **Major Cole** started to carry out repairs but the major part of the exploration and restoration work was done by **Sir John Marshal**, Director General of Archeology of India from 1912 to 1919 who undertook large-scale exploration, restoration, reconstruction and also cataloging the monuments.

8.3 Objects of Interest

a) The Great *Stupa*

The present dimension of the Great *Stupa* is 120 feet in diameter and 50 feet in height excluding the railing and umbrella. It consists of a hemispherical dome, truncated near the top and crowned by a triple umbrella set at the centre of a heavy masonry pedestal, within a square railing. At its south gateway is a double stairway leading up to a circular terrace (meant for circumambulation) built against the base. The whole *stupa* is enclosed by a stone balustrade and can be accessed from the four cardinal directions through four gateways.

The elaborately carved **four gateways** (***torana***) were all built during the 1st century BC. Each gateway consists of **two square pillars**

crowned by a set of four lions or elephants or pot-bellied dwarfs, supporting a superstructure of **three curviform architraves** (cross beams) with spirally rolled ends, the overall height being about 28 feet (excluding crowning elements). The architraves are separated from each other by **four pieces of square blocks** and **six carved uprights** inserted between the architraves. The interspaces are filled with statues of elephant- and horse-riders facing both ways. On the summit of the gateway stands the emblem of Buddhism, viz., the *Dhammacakka* or Wheel of *Dhamma*, supported on elephants flanked on either side by a guardian *yakkha* and at the end by *Tiratanas*, symbolizing the Buddhist trinity — the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*. The entire surface of the gateways is covered with bas-reliefs, which can be classified into five groups, namely:

- Scenes from the life of the Buddha,
- The Jatakas,
- Historical events such as the Division of Relics, the Stupa of Ramagama and Asoka's visit to the Bodhi tree,
- The Manushi or Previous Buddhas and
- Miscellaneous Scenes and Decoration.

b) *Stupas* 2 & 3

Besides the Great *Stupa,* there are many others, the well-known being *Stupas* 2 and 3. *Stupa* 3 of the 2nd century BC and modeled after the Main *Stupa* 1, is located by its side. The relic content of *Stupa* 3 is of great sanctity as the inscriptions on the stone boxes indicate that the caskets contained the **bodily relics of the Chief Disciples**, the Most Ven. Sariputta and the Most Ven Moggallana.

Stupa 2, on a lower ledge is without any gateway but its ground-balustrade is remarkable for its ornamental relief framed inside medallions. It is also of the 2nd century BC and of great sanctity for inside was found four small relic-caskets of steatite containing the **ashes of ten Buddhist saints**, namely: (1) Kasapagota, (2) Majjhima, (3) Haritiputa, (4) Vachhiya-Suvijayata, pupil of Gota, (5)

Mahavanaya, (6) Apagira, (7) Kodiniputa, (8) Kosikiputa, (9) Gotiputa, (10) Mogaliputa. That all the teachers were not contemporary is proved by the fact that Mogaliputa is mentioned in the Andher and Sonari relic caskets as a pupil of Gotiputa, himself one generation after Kasapagota and Majjhima. Thus in *Stupa* 2 were entombed the relics of at least three generations of Buddhist teachers.

c) New Chetiyagiri Vihara

The new Chetiyagiri Vihara, which is perched on the northern face of the Sanchi hill near the main entrance was built by the Maha Bodhi Society of India in 1952. Inside this *vihara* are enshrined the bodily relics of the **two Chief Disciples of the Buddha —** Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana, which were discovered in *Stupa* 3 by Cunningham in 1851, taken to London for safekeeping and then returned to India in 1949 upon the request of the Maha Bodhi Society. The relics of ten Buddhist saints recovered from *Stupa* 2 and kept in the British Museum were also returned to India in 1956. Of these, the first casket containing the ashes of the Arahants Mogaliputa, Kosikiputa and Gotiputa were presented to Sri Lanka while the relics of the other saints were also enshrined in this *vihara*.

d) *Stupas* Sites Near Sanchi

The relics of the Chief Disciples were also found in the contemporary *Stupa* 2 of **Satdhara**, about 11km southwest of Sanchi. In fact, areas around Sanchi are full of relic *stupas* such as **Sonari**, 10 km south west of Sanchi, Satdhara as mentioned and **Andher**, 15 km east south east of Vidisa, where portions of relics of most of the ten saints identified in *Stupa* 2 of Sanchi were also found. The evidence from these *stupas* proves that even by the 2nd century BC, the practice of distribution of relics extended from the Buddha and His direct disciples to the later dignitaries of the *Sangha*.